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THE FREEDOM OF AUTHORITY. Essays in Apologetics. By J. MacBride Sterrett, D. D. The Head Professor of Philosophy in the George Washington University. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1905. Pp. vii, 319.

The author of these essays in apologetics is an impassioned pleader for religious conformity. Emerson's dictum "Whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist" inspires him with a feeling which he has no hesitancy in designating as *odium theologicum*, though he apologizes for it, as it "may sometimes seem to swamp the philosophic calm." He also apologizes for "the mixture of metaphor with the dialect of philosophy," and confesses that "the larger part of the book was written *aus einem Gusse*, in a heat, almost at a sitting." The rest consists of reprinted chapters from earlier books by the author on "Reason and Authority in Religion" and "Hegel's Philosophy of Religion," and articles in the *Andover Review*, the *New World*, and the *Philosophical Review*. In all parts of the volume one enjoys "the mixture of metaphor." It allows a clearer insight into the peculiar workings of the author's mind, and makes a deeper impression on a thoughtful reader, than the sections composed in "the dialect of philosophy."

Professor Sterrett's discussion of the ethics of creed-conformity and his criticism of Sabatier, Harnack, and Loisy deserve attention. Again and again he affirms, "Whoso would be a man must be a conformist." According to him, the man of good manners conforms to the prevailing views and common practices of his tribe. He believes in the catholic creeds, or at least repeats them; he goes to church and partakes of the Eucharist which is "the chief means for realizing the real presence of a bodily absent Lord;" and he behaves as respectable people do. It is not quite clear what a man should do whose tribe is made up of Unitarians, Quakers, Social Democrats, or Buddhists. Apparently the author would make an exception in his case and permit him to deny the creed of his fathers, to abandon the ancestral customs, to become "a veritable Ishmaelite" and heed the call of the Protestant Episcopal Church. A genuine conviction is always to be respected, and there is much to be said in favor of the author's main thesis. It is, therefore, with a certain regret one notes his plea for a disingenuous use of the creeds. "It remains true," he says, "that we can accept many traditional conceptions and dogmas only in a

Pickwickian sense." He presumes to make the amazing assertion that "divine grace sweeps onward to convert even the devil himself and to drown out the inextinguishable fires of an everlasting hell, leaving at most the refining and transforming experience of a purgatory," in utter forgetfulness of the solemn anathema at the end of the Nicene creed, and of his own bitter denunciation of such private judgments. He confides to the reader that when he repeats a creed, he means by it: "I, John ——, do hereby, with my whole nineteen-century-long history and thought, yield unfeigned assent to the result of this history and thought, as embodied in the historical creed before me." To make a fourth or sixteenth century formula the result of the last nineteen centuries of history and thought is perhaps the least astonishing feat in this intellectual jugglery.

The reviewer once asked a friend of his, a noble man and a minister in the Episcopal Church, how he could repeatedly affirm, in the presence of men, that he believed that Jesus was born of a virgin, when in reality he believed that he was the son of Joseph and Mary. The answer was, "I mean by it that I believe Jesus to have led a remarkably pure life." Professor Sterrett would probably not go as far as that. His sincere admiration for the Nicene formula as "the liberator of the perplexed conscience and the doubting intellect of Christendom to-day" and "the one sacred hieroglyph to which a philosophy of history demands loyal assent from every rational Christian" no doubt prevents such a marked difference between public profession and private faith. But as he allows himself, and encourages others, to give an "unfeigned assent" to dogmas which he confesses that he "can only accept in a Pickwickian sense," there is no reason why he should not let his real thought go where it pleases, and assign any meaning he chooses to the words of the creed.

Professor Sterrett views with alarm the "de-religionizing of the Church" by the attempt to escape from orthodoxy into ethical Christianity, into the religious consciousness of the Christ, and into social ethics, or the philanthropic work of "institutional churches;" and he sounds a note of warning against the dangerous descent to "mere ethics," "secular morality," and "humanitarianism." There seems to be a certain incompatibility between "mere ethics" and the profession of faith in formulas that "can only be accepted in a Pickwickian sense."

Conformity has, of course, its place as well as independence.

The individual is profoundly influenced by the prevailing views and common practices in his environment. Some part of the knowledge gained by the human race and some rules of expediency resulting from its long experience come to him through these channels. It is well that he should grow in knowledge and in character by observation, imitation, and obedience, by seeing what others have seen and by acting as others have acted. It is desirable that he should be inspired by the noblest sentiments, enlightened by the truest thoughts, and impelled to action by the finest examples society can set before him, and it is his privilege and duty to enter into the rich heritage of the past with reverence, docility, and gratitude. Because of this tremendous pressure of the social life upon the individual it is also of great importance that the collective creed, howsoever expressed, the prevalent public opinion, be sensitive to the advance of thought, and that social institutions reflect high ideals of equity and justice. The suggestion of Jesus that new wine be poured into new wineskins seems wiser than the favorite method in church and state of pouring new wine into the old skins, by which both are spoiled. On the other hand, there is no progress except by the reaction of strong personalities against the common views and practices, by their insistence upon seeing things with their own eyes, trusting in their own judgment, speaking with their own voice, and pursuing their heart's desire away from the beaten paths. These are the heroes of our race, the majestic figures that inspire our youth, the leaders men delight to follow. In the presence of one who stands on his own feet and lives out of his own life nobly, not willing to be conformed to the fashions of the world about him, but longing to be transformed into his own ideal, rising by his spiritual independence above the crowd of respectable conformists who repeat upon their bended knees the opinions of other men and other days, we instinctively feel, "This is a man." That is evidently what Emerson meant. That is why the Bible appeals to us so much more strongly than the creeds. The bulk of it was written by incurable non-conformists. The canonization of the radical is the tardy recognition by the conservative of the simple truth that, in nature's economy, there is room for a centrifugal force as well as for a centripetal force, for a tendency to vary the type as well as a tendency to preserve it.

In his criticism of Harnack and Sabatier, Professor Sterrett points out some real weaknesses in their position. It does not

seem fair to define Christianity in such a manner as to leave out what has been most characteristic of this historic phenomenon during the many centuries of its existence. To ascribe absolute finality to the religious consciousness of Jesus and to make it an external standard seems impossible in view of the uncertainty as to the actual contents of this consciousness, when historical criticism is allowed to do its work. But it is neither dignified nor just to designate the earnest call of these thinkers to the Church to return to the faith of Jesus as a "crab-cry" and to denounce those who raise it as "flying in the face of our western form of civilization, and aiding and abetting the yellow peril of Orientalism." The author looks, with a curious embarrassment, upon "the anti-ecclesiastical religion of the Christ when on earth," and cannot conceal his contempt for those who would sacrifice the "decent clothing" of "historical Christianity" for a thing like that. The historical Jesus who lived and died among men has little interest to him. The creeds which he regards as "a sufficient statement of the Christian faith," as is well known, completely ignore the teachings of Jesus, his attitude on moral and religious questions, his relations to different classes of men, his character and spirit.

Professor Sterrett is in greater sympathy with Loisy than with the Protestant thinkers. For with all his radicalism, the Catholic scholar acknowledges the authority of the Church. He is in this essential point a conformist. Besides, Loisy does not deny that Jesus was raised from the dead, but only denies that this is demonstrable as an historical fact. And Loisy insists upon the importance of the cult and the indispensable character of the historic episcopate. As to the historic episcopate, Professor Sterrett believes it to be absolutely necessary to the Church's well-being, but not to its being; and in an appendix copied from an earlier book he denounces unsparingly the right wing of the high church party in the Protestant Episcopal Church. He belongs himself to the left wing of that party. He is angry with this little clique, whose harmless conceit only amuses other people, because its "noisy aggressiveness" prevents Christendom from coming together peaceably on the Lambeth platform (Scriptures, Apostles' and Nicene Creed, two Sacraments and no more, and the Historic Episcopate), and from inviting the nations of the earth to join a united Church.

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